

Yurami Van Eer
HST 222

While a great majority of our class spent several days criticizing the opening scenes in *The Molly Maguires* for their lack of dialogue, a substantial amount can be said about the cinematic choices and their meanings. Directed by Martin Ritt, the film begins with a series of shots establishing the coal mines. While the length of the montage may seem to drag out, directors often do this to let the audience sink it to the monotonous routine of what is occurring on screen. Additionally, silence is often used purposely; a method to make the audience uncomfortable, focus and rely on visual aspects with no auditory (in this case no dialogue) distraction, and force themselves into the character's shoes. For me, this was an effective tool which immersed me into the lives of the characters. If I was exhausted and bored through several minutes of simply watching the mining experience, what a grueling life it must've been to work in that field for countless years with minimal pay. Furthermore, there is a scene that especially drags out, showing the coal cart being levied down into the mine. The line appears to rustle and continue to do so for quite some time. While watching with a friend, they were frustrated at how long the scene lingered. I held a different take, noting that it illustrated how far down underground the workers had to go everyday.

Martin Gritt forces the audience into a moral dilemma throughout the film. The hardworking laborers face extreme neglect from their employers, and are put through gruesome conditions on a day to day basis. Naturally, one wants to root for said men throughout the story. The predicament emerges once said workers use violence against their opposers, often going to the extremes of murdering them. They repeatedly destroy the work that they and their coworkers spent days laboring over. Additionally, we are presented with a likable main character, who shows empathy for his coworkers. While undercover, he still attempts to get the Molly Maguires to do the right thing, and even goes on a rampage with one of them in a local store out of anger. This film intrinsically poses the question of "wrong vs right". It serves for profound characters and shows the reality and complexity of social causes.

I did believe there were some unnecessary scenes. The Rugby(?) scene felt out of place and almost foolish. The fight scene in the bar was also abnormal. Besides those scenes, "The Molly

Maguires" was an enjoyable historical fiction. I would definitely recommend this movie for next year's students.